

DETROIT FREE PRESS
18 AUGUST 1977

EXPERIMENTS AT IONIA

Judges Knew of Drug Tests

BY PAUL MAGNUSSON
Free Press Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Judges and officials of two state agencies apparently were informed of and gave approval to "mildly hair-raising" CIA experiments with LSD and hypnosis on unwitting patients at Ionia State Hospital in the late 1950s.

Revelations of the apparent involvement of the judges and officials are contained in declassified documents released by the CIA Wednesday in response to a Free Press request under the federal freedom of information law.

Though nearly all names are censored from the documents, they indicate that Michigan judges were investigated by the CIA for security clearances and that the state Hospital Commission approved the use of LSD on Ionia patients.

Unidentified state and city officials also were ordered notified of the project, code named MK-ULTRA.

THE DOCUMENTS contain no proof that state officials gave or withheld approval in direct communications with the CIA. That approval was granted is indicated, however, by the fact that documents show doctors were seeking state approval and by the fact that the experiments were conducted.

The doctors apparently sought approval from the state Department of Mental Health as well as the Hospital Commission.

The purpose of the project was to "exploit the research potential" of 142 criminal sexual psychopaths at Ionia by drugging and interrogating them in the same way foreign agents might be questioned.

The work at Ionia was one of 149 separate projects conducted by the CIA to learn ways in which to control human behavior.

The project involved 85 hospitals, universities and pharmaceutical and research institutions in the United States and Canada, according to recent congressional testimony by CIA Director Stansfield Turner.

Turner told a Senate subcommittee recently that all but the financial records of the project had been ordered destroyed by the outgoing project director after revelations that an Army biochemist committed suicide in 1955 after he was given LSD without his knowledge.

Little detail is contained in the heavily censored documents on the Ionia project.

One CIA official who traveled to Ionia to inquire about the slow progress of the experiment reported back that he found them "mildly hair-raising."

The documents show that six psychiatrists at Ionia used hypnosis and LSD, a hallucinogenic drug, on criminal sexual psychopaths and then interrogated them and reported the conversations.

The drugs were given "both openly and surreptitiously" to see if patients could be induced to reveal details of their crimes.

Results of the experiment were kept in a CIA safe at Ionia and all correspondence between the doctors and the agency employed pseudonyms or the first names only of the doctors.

More than \$30,000 in salaries and expenses, including entertainment, was spent on the project, the records show. Drugs were furnished by the CIA.

Documents show the hospital superintendent knew of the experiments.

ONE OF THE PROGRAM'S researchers, Dr. John G. Haarer, now a general practitioner in Sarasota, Fla., confirmed this in a telephone interview with the Free Press.

He identified Dr. Perry Robertson, now deceased, as the project director.

Charles Wagg, director of the Department of Mental Health at the time of the experiments, roughly 1957 through 1960, said he had not known of the program.

Dr. Albert Wallaert, chief psychiatrist at the Detroit Recorder's Court Psychiatric Clinic for 31 years, said last week that he knew nothing of the experiment. He termed the experiment "far-fetched," illegal and unethical.